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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001597

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR  
DRL  
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SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)  
TREASURY FOR JEFFREY LEVINE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/17/2011  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [ECON](#) [UNSC](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: PREVAL COMING TO DC/PENSIVE WITH AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Thomas C. Tighe for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Ambassador met with President Preval on August 24 to review the bilateral agenda on the eve of her departure for leave and Washington consultations. Preval plans to visit Washington on September 18-19 in advance of the UN General Assembly meeting: he told the Ambassador during their meeting that he would not include Washington in his itinerary, but called her later to say that he had changed his mind after having met with business sector advisors. He again pressed the Ambassador for USG support for preferential trade legislation (HOPE), though Richard Coles, one of business advisors told Polcouns that Preval's visit to Washington was aimed at reinforcing the primary importance of the U.S.-Haiti relationship in advance of Preval's visit to Cuba for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference. Preval underlined his commitment to establishing order in Cite Soleil, though he wants to limit casualties to the maximum extent. He pointed to the importance of the economy, stressing jobs and roads, and expressed disappointment that the recent donors conference had not addressed Haiti's budget gap. Preval seemed fixated with Aristide, speculating that Lavalas could win the next parliamentary elections eighteen months hence and take control if his own administration could not quickly deliver tangible economic benefits. Preval appeared somewhat stressed and alone (post will report septel on his surprising lack of staff support). Though his worries about the economy are understandable, his ruminations regarding Lavalas and Aristide are puzzling; Aristide supporters do not appear to be gaining any political traction, but Preval has mostly absented himself from the political sphere and not built on the political momentum his own victory created.

On to Washington  
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¶2. (C) At her request, prior to her departure from Haiti for two weeks, the Ambassador on the afternoon of August 24 met privately with President Preval in the presidential palace. Preval stated during the meeting that he did not plan to include Washington in his trip to the U.S. to attend the UN General Assembly. On her way out, however, the Ambassador met a group of business sector advisors going in to meet with Preval. The President later called to inform

her that as a result of that meeting he had changed his mind and would visit September 18-19, and hoped to meet administration officials and members of Congress. During the meeting, he did again press the Ambassador on HOPE legislation. Why, he asked, would the administration support such a measure for Peru and not for Haiti?

13. (C) Richard Coles, one of Preval's chief allies in the business community and a participant in the meeting subsequent to the Ambassador's, told Polcouns the following morning that lobbying for HOPE was important, but not the primary motivation for visiting Washington. Coles related that he had argued successfully that if Preval were going to attend the NAM conference in Cuba, he must also demonstrate that the U.S. remained Haiti's most important international partner. Preval, he said, did not need much convincing to change his mind. Polcouns expressed appreciation for Cole's position, and suggested that the GoH could most usefully demonstrate its commitment to good relations with the U.S. and the region by voting for Guatemala for a UN Security Council seat instead of Venezuela. Coles promised to weigh in on the matter with Preval.

Security

14. (C) Preval reported that the gangs were panicked as they feel that MINUSTAH is closing in. He must walk a careful line, however, and did not want to put Cite Soleil residents or MINUSTAH troops at undue risk. He stressed that he had made no concessions to gang leaders in the course of their discussions: Gang leader William Baptiste aka "Ti Blanc" had complained about giving up expensive weapons, some that cost

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over \$5,000. Preval was not sympathetic. Ultimately, however, jobs would have to triumph over guns.

It's the Economy...

15. (C) Preval stressed he needed immediate results on the economic front. He downplayed the success of the recent donors conference, referencing his disappointment that the donors had not addressed the GoH budget gap by noting that it did not matter if you successfully treated cancer and the patient died of a heart attack. He pressed for funds for roads, arguing they were necessary to expand electricity and water services in the countryside, and lasting symbols that the country was developing. He suggested that the USG fund a 60 Km road along the coast in the South East Department to Belle Anse. If the Ambassador could bring anything for him Washington, he said, bring him roads. Preval also revealed an urbanization plan for Cite Soleil, that included apartments and single family homes for which he would seek investors.

...Or Else Aristide

16. (C) Preval warned that Lavalas could win the next parliamentary elections (February 2008) gain control of the government, select the next prime minister and police chief, all without Aristide's return, if he was not able to jump-start the economy. Maybe, Preval said mockingly, he too will end up in South Africa. He must get people back to work and convince his people that Haiti will change. If not, his future is questionable.

Comment

17. (C) Preval was taciturn and difficult to engage -- Richard Coles also offered that Preval was "unfocussed" during their meeting. His pre-occupation with the economy is understandable, but his maudlin speculation about a Lavalas

comeback does not necessarily follow. The return, or release from prison, of Lavalas activists has been much in the press recently -- the return of the notoriously violent ex-Lavalas deputy Nahoun Marcellus from the Dominican Republic on August 23 generated headlines -- but there is no sign of a groundswell of support for Lavalas or Aristide. More remarkable is Preval's own absence from the political sphere.

After having successfully created the L'Espwa party as an alternative to Lavalas, he has effectively abandoned the party and made no other effort to keep organized his political support. His goals and policies for the economy would resonate with the public, if only he would publicize them. After receiving sharp criticism after weeks of silence regarding security policy, Preval gained broad support for his tough but measured approach to gang violence, once he explained it publicly. On the other issues he professes to worry about, a little public outreach would go a long way.

TIGHE